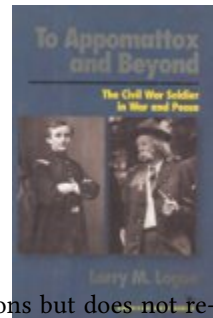


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Larry M. Logue. *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War And Peace*. Chicago, Ill.: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1996. xiv + 168 pp. \$22.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56663-093-1.

Reviewed by Brooks Simpson (Arizona State University)
Published on H-CivWar (October, 1996)



In the last decade, scholars have shown a renewed interest in the life of the Civil War soldier; at the same time we have benefitted from the efforts of several historians who have explored the experience of Civil War veterans. In this concise synthesis, Larry Logue attempts to summarize the findings of these scholars and to offer some observations of his own as he seeks to weave together the wartime and postwar lives of these citizen soldiers and veterans. The result is a narrative that may leave the reader gasping for breath, for Logue covers a good deal of ground expeditiously, at times moving so quickly that the narrative whizzes by statements and assertions worth a second look.

In the first four chapters, Logue compares and contrasts the soldiers of the two armies. The Union army drew disproportionately from wage laborers and young men who had yet to fix a stake in society; such men had less to sacrifice and possibly more to gain from enlistment than did their better-established peers. In contrast, a good number of slaveholders joined the Confederate army, often as officers, in part to protect their economic investment. Soldiers' character and attitudes reflected regional origins. Northern soldiers sought to exercise self-control and self-discipline; southern warriors, who more often indulged their emotions, were absorbed by the need to prove their manhood and protect the honor of their region and their families as well as their own personal reputations.

Such generalizations raise as many questions as they answer. For example, how did these characteristics shape the fighting ability of these soldiers? Was Billy Yank a more disciplined soldier than Johnny Reb? Was the slaveholder's experience in issuing orders offset by the Confederate soldier's refusal to be treated in slave-like

fashion? Logue raises these questions but does not really explore them. Such an inquiry might prove fruitful indeed in understanding how Civil War soldiers fought. Ulysses S. Grant once observed that while Confederate soldiers fought furiously during the first day of a battle, as an engagement wore on, the steadiness and reliability of their Federal counterparts would emerge as decisive. Confederate soldiers boasted that, man for man, they were better fighters than their blue-clad counterparts, although such did not seem to be the case in the West. And perhaps the superiority of Confederate cavalry early in the war was due to the familiarity of southern horsemen with their mounts, much as the ability to work as a team in systematic and organized fashion may have given Union artillerists an edge. In short, did these national and regional characteristics shape how these Americans fought?

Moreover, such generalizations about Union and Confederate soldiers pertain primarily to whites. Logue touches upon the black military experience, but he does not subject the black soldier to the same scrutiny as he devotes to their white counterparts. Did free blacks and former slaves share the same motivations? Did their previous experiences shape their military performance? Many Union officers believed former slaves would make good soldiers precisely because they were used to taking orders; indeed, by 1864 the average Union black soldier might have been a more effective fighter than a good number of his white counterparts, although they were not always given the chance to demonstrate this. At a time when many weary white veterans were looking forward to the end of their enlistment, and others proved reluctant recruits and indifferent conscripts, black Union soldiers knew that they still had something to prove—and might well pay a higher price if they failed,

as the comparative treatment of white and black prisoners by their Confederate captors suggested. However, Logue correctly recognizes that there was a sharp divergence in what happened to white and black Union soldiers at war's end, for while Billy Yank marched home, his black counterpart stayed in uniform on occupation duty for several months in the South—an experience that most scholars neglect or forget altogether.

Logue's efforts to compare Billy Yank and Johnny Reb may please those readers enamored of dichotomies, but such categories tend to blur variations within each army. Union soldiers clearly recognized differences between members of the three main field armies (Potomac, Ohio/Cumberland, and Tennessee), as did their Confederate counterparts in the armies of Northern Virginia and Tennessee. The Yank/Reb division may also obscure traits shaped far more by class, ethnicity, or occupation than by the color of one's uniform. In each army, farmers' sons may have had more in common with their counterparts on the other side than with the urban workers or young aristocrats with whom they served. And, although Logue is aware of the varying circumstances under which soldiers on both sides entered military service over the course of the conflict, he does not always heed the importance of these variables in fashioning his composite portrait. As in many another work about Civil War soldiers, the boys of 1861, not the conscripts, bounty hunters, and reluctant volunteers of 1863 and 1864, fill the pages of his book.

In the final four chapters, Logue recounts the postwar experiences of Civil War veterans. The narrative reflects the fact that the scholarship concerning the veteran experience has yet to approach the quantity and sometimes the quality of effort expended on the soldier experience. Thus, the majority of his discussion of Union veterans concerns their quest for pensions and the formation of veterans' organizations, while the chapter on postwar Confederates features their participation in the Ku Klux Klan, the emergence of veterans' homes, and the persistence of the bloody shirt as waved by Confederate politicians. A third chapter carries the story of the veteran experience into the twentieth century; the final chapter offers some suggestive but undeveloped comparisons between the impact of veterans North and South.

For those unfamiliar with the extant literature on Civil War veterans, these chapters will introduce them to recent scholarly findings; however, as a whole, they are thin and disappointing, in part because they leave unasked so many questions. How did wartime service affect the attitudes of veterans once they returned home? Did it shape their political behavior or partisan allegiance? Did the change in racial attitudes toward blacks among white Union soldiers persist in the postwar period, and did it shape their behavior on matters related to race? In celebrating the veteran experience, did veterans distinguish between volunteers, conscripts, and bounty hunters, or did they blur these differences in refashioning (if not creating) a "shared" experience based upon the eager and patriotic volunteer? Did skills and experiences acquired during the war render veterans distinctive in their postwar pursuits? What did non-veterans make of their veteran counterparts? How important was the soldier experience to the identity of these veterans? Finally, although the idea of treating the wartime and postwar experiences of Civil War soldiers offers the possibility of a new perspective that might draw connections between military service and American society, on the whole the potential for innovative treatment of such issues is neglected. Instead, in the end Logue offers us two extended essays sharing the same cover.

One senses that Logue tried to do too much in too few pages. Forced to offer generalizations that at times rest upon the findings of a single monograph, Logue presents assertions based upon assumptions—both of which deserve debate and discussion. Nor is it clear exactly what audience the volume will serve; its welcome defiance of traditional chronological boundaries may actually prove counterproductive to its utility in the classroom. Still, in places the text is provocative and suggestive if not always satisfying; perhaps the questions it raises, implicitly as well as explicitly, will spur more insightful inquiry into the lives of Civil War soldiers and veterans

Copyright (c) 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact <H-Net@h-net.msu.edu>. [The book review editor for H-CivWar is Daniel E. Sutherland. <dsutherl@comp.uark.edu>].

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-civwar>

Citation: Brooks Simpson. Review of Logue, Larry M., *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War And Peace*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. October, 1996.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=634>

Copyright © 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.